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Coast Guard Launches Multi-Billion Dollar Plan For New Fleet Of Ships, Aircraft, Command Systems For Homeland Security, Other Missions

U. S. Deputy Secretary of Transportation, Michael P. Jackson, joined by U. S. Coast Guard Commandant Thomas H. Collins, today announced the award of a landmark contract valued at \$11.04 billion for a fleet of new ships and aircraft, plus improved command and control systems, to meet the service's homeland security and other mission needs. In addition, the contract includes \$5.91 billion for operating, maintenance, and sustainment costs for a value of \$16.95 billion. The contract was awarded to Integrated Coast Guard Systems (ICGS), a joint venture established by Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman.

"The Deepwater Program will ensure that the Coast Guard continues to guarantee the nation's maritime security," said Deputy Secretary Jackson. "As America's first line of defense for maritime homeland security, it is critical that the Coast Guard be able to identify and intercept targets of interest as far from U. S. shores as possible."

Known as the 'Deepwater Program,' the ICGS award is the largest ever for the U. S. Coast Guard. It calls for the delivery of the first ships and planes – and upgrades to some existing vessels – within the next five years. This is the first time the Coast Guard has bundled procurement of several types of ships, aircraft and other equipment into an integrated procurement program.

The contract may extend up to 30 years. Deepwater will involve the acquisition of up to 91 ships, 35 fixed-wing aircraft, 34 helicopters, 76 unmanned surveillance aircraft, and upgrade of 49 existing cutters and 93 helicopters, in addition to systems for communications, surveillance and command and control.

"The tragic events of September 11th changed the world as we know it. Homeland security, now more than ever, is a mission where we must succeed," said Admiral Collins. "As the leader in Maritime Homeland Defense, the Coast Guard must have the most capable ships, aircraft, sensors and communications technology available to protect our nation and carry out our many missions. The Deepwater Program will give us the necessary tools to create an effective, layered defense of our nation's maritime interests."

The vessels and aircraft included in the ICGS procurement project make up the Coast Guard's primary multi-mission coastal and offshore fleet -- larger Coast Guard cutters and aircraft which serve as the backbone of many missions including drug and illegal migrant interdiction, fisheries enforcement, pollution patrols, and homeland security patrols, boardings and inspections. Command, control and communications systems will be designed not only to integrate operations of the new ships and planes, but also improve coordination of all Coast Guard operations, as well as with other Federal agencies and the Department of Defense.

Of 39 similar navy and coast guard fleets surveyed around the world, the U.S. Coast Guard's vessel fleet is the 37th oldest. The Coast Guard's twelve 1960's era Hamilton class cutters are among the service's aging fleet slated for replacement under the Deepwater contract. The 378-foot Hamilton class are the largest multi-mission, helicopter capable ships operated by the Coast Guard.

Other existing ships that would be replaced include fourteen 1960's vintage 210-foot Reliance class, and a variety of other ships, some dating back from World War II. Aircraft readiness has also been a recurring problem in recent years with expenditures for repairs on the rise, and some of the Coast Guard's existing helicopters cannot operate from the flight decks of some older cutters.

The new ships and planes are coming at an opportune time for the Coast Guard. In addition to increased homeland security responsibilities which involve "pushing our borders back" to protect our ports, waterways, and coastlines, the Coast Guard still has many missions vital to the nation's physical, economic and environmental security. Primary duties include: search and rescue, maritime emergency response, military operations, anti-drug patrols, illegal migrant interdiction, and fisheries enforcement.

The Coast Guard's Deepwater Program that led to the ICGS contract has been in development for five years. The ICGS contract does not include smaller rescue and patrol boats, buoy tenders and workboats, icebreakers, or shore side facilities.

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